

EXPRESS MAIL NO: EL 798922836 US

**PATENT**

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## **Abstract**

This invention relates to methods and apparatus for manufacturing shaped polymeric articles by substantially continuous vacuum forming. The method includes providing a sheet of hot polymeric material which is disposed onto a rotating belt having a mold impression. Vacuum pressure is applied to the polymeric material through the belt so as to draw the hot polymeric material into intimate contact with the mold impression to form a patterned sheet portion and a remaining sheet portion. This method thereafter cools at least the patterned sheet portion below a heat deflection temperature of the polymeric material, forms the remaining sheet portion, and then cools the remaining sheet portion below the heat deflection temperature so that features other than the central pattern, such as nail and butt edges, can be mechanically worked into the polymeric sheet.

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